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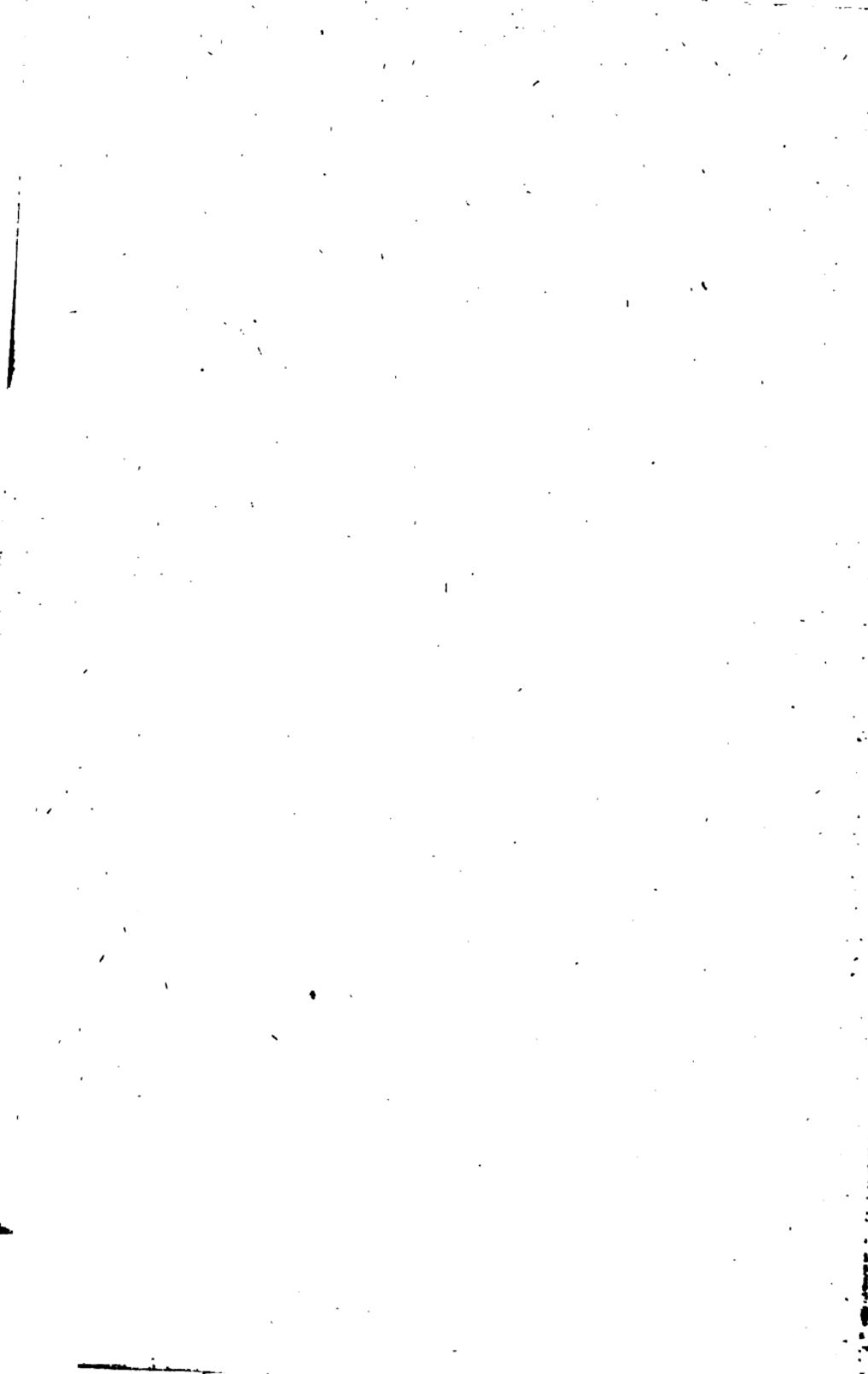
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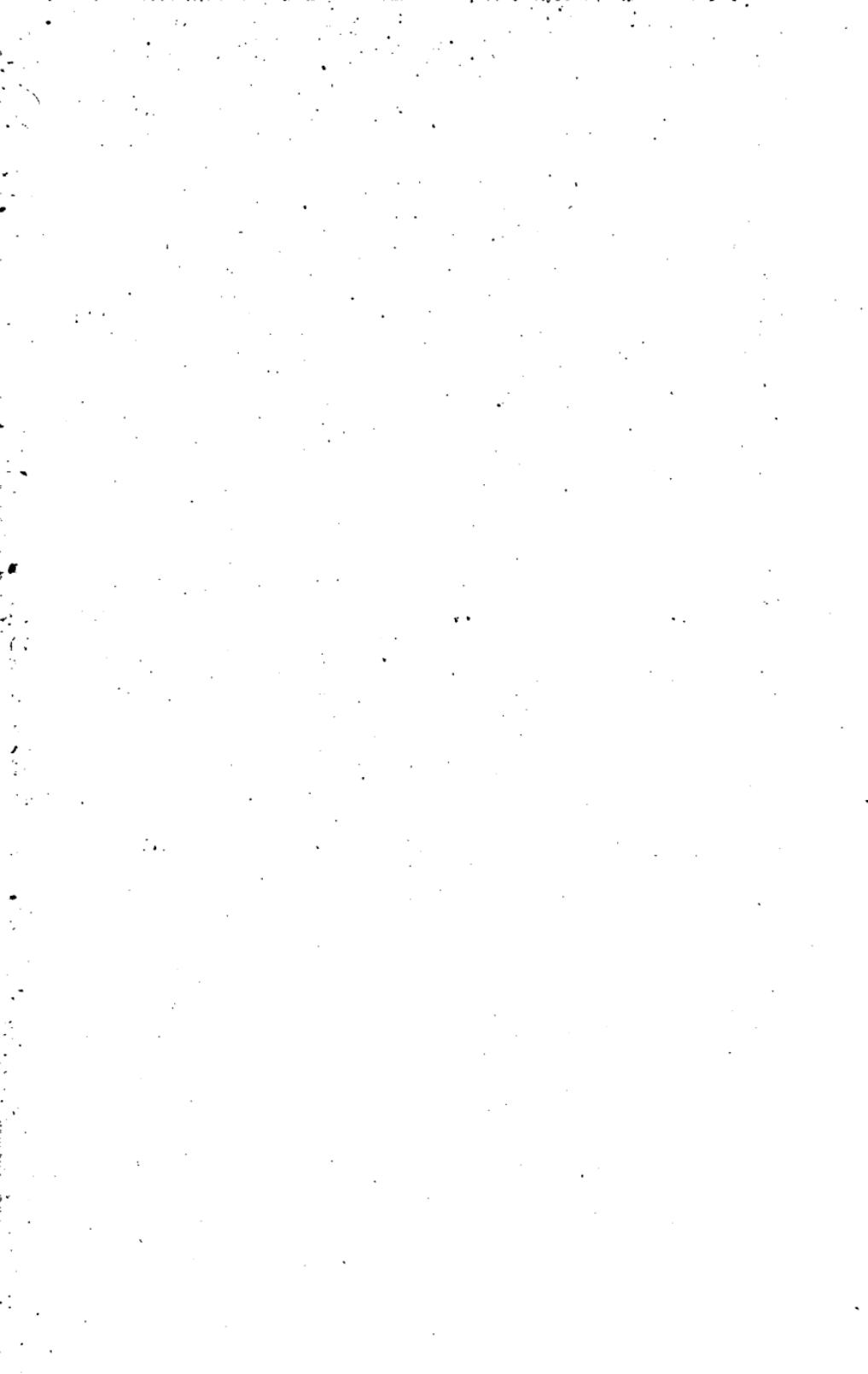
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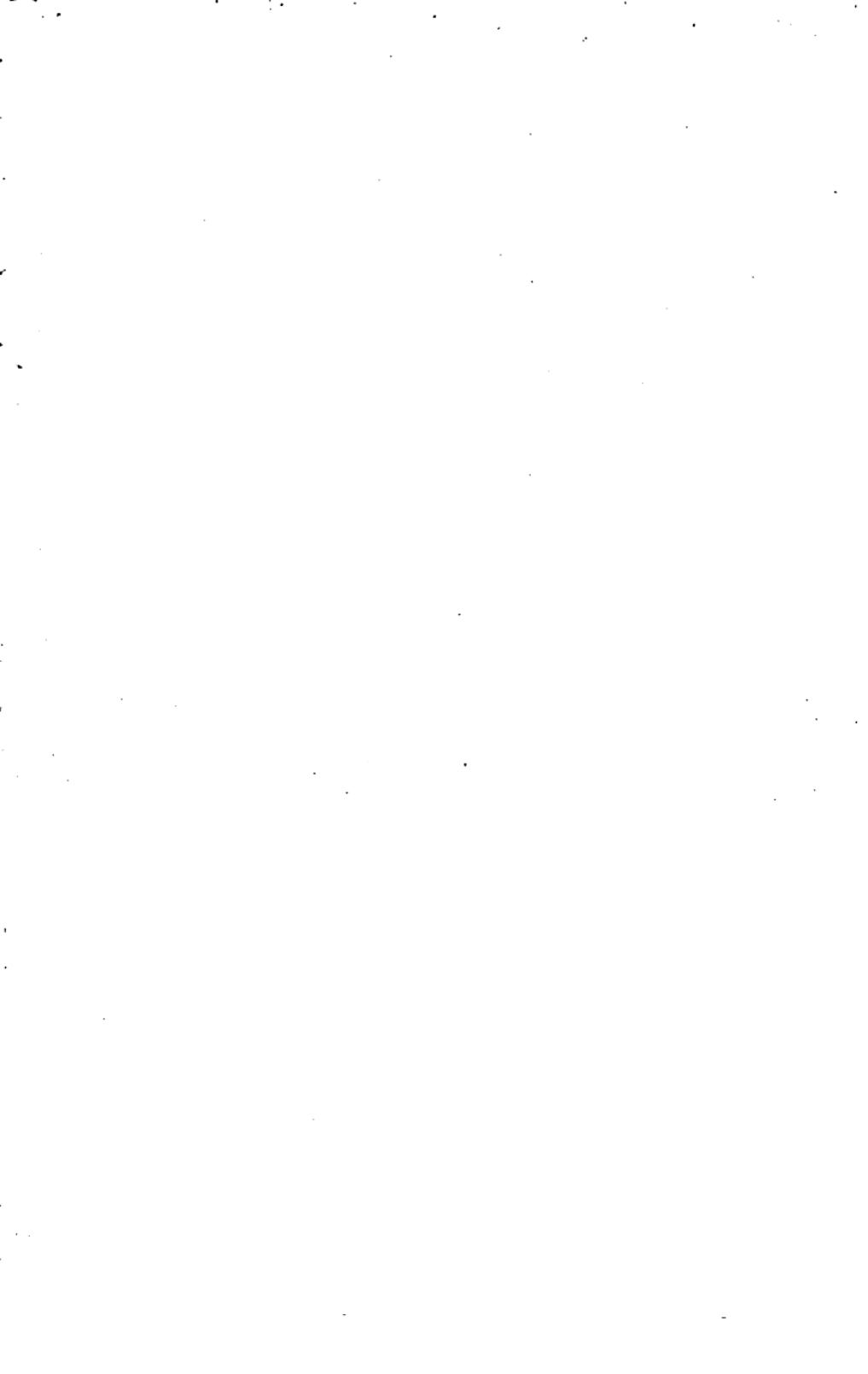
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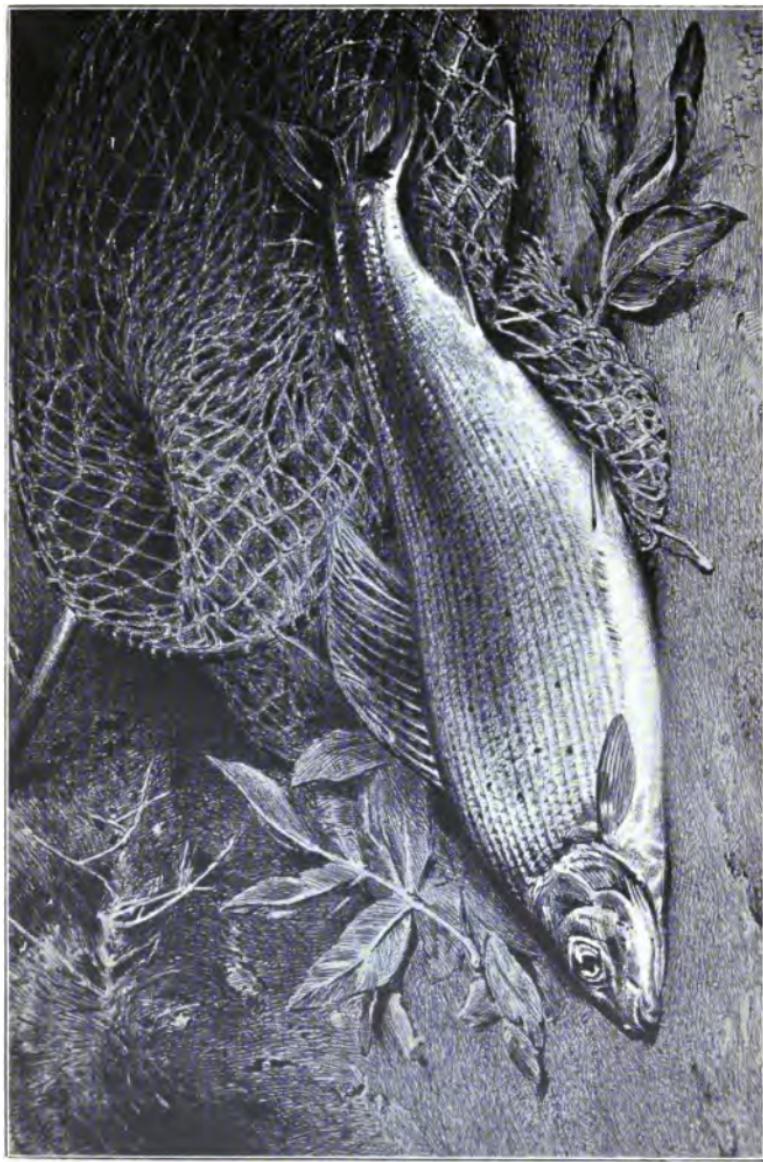
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**GRAYLING FISHING**  
**IN**  
**SOUTH COUNTRY STREAMS**

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[A. W. Cooper, Esq.

### GRAYLING.

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# GRAYLING FISHING IN SOUTH COUNTRY STREAMS



BY

H. A. ROLT

ASSISTANT SECRETARY PISCATORIAL SOCIETY

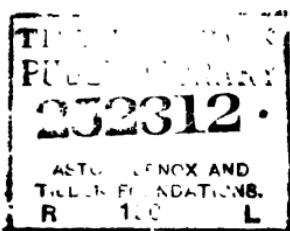
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IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PLEASANT DAYS

SPENT AMONGST THE HAMPSHIRE GRAYLING

BY

THE AUTHOR

102  
27.8.1902

11.2.1902



## PREFACE.

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HERE is a peculiar and indescribable charm and fascination in grayling fishing which few whose tastes lie in the direction of this pre-eminently winter pastime can have failed to realise. The fish, indeed, has been designated the 'Lorelei' of the river, and rightly so. But there is this all-important difference betwixt the German siren and the grayling: the former by her silvery voice enticed the unfortunate boatman to his doom, but the grayling, through the all-alluring interest it excites in the breast of the angler, falls in the end a victim to its own enchantments.

Once a grayling fisher always a grayling fisher may be well said of those who affect this branch of the piscatorial art, for when the die is once cast, when the cold-weather fly-fisher has foregone his old loves, the roach, chub, and pike, for a new love, the grayling, the passion not only endures but grows upon him as season after season comes round; and it is not surpassing strange that this should be so. Thymallus is not, like the hard-fighting speckled trout, approached when 'the palm and the may

make country houses gay,' nor when 'the fields breathe sweet, and the daisies kiss our feet,' when Nature is bursting forth into new life ; when the migrants amongst our feathered friends are beginning to return to this little isle of ours to add to the pleasure and enjoyment of our rambles by the river-side ; when March Browns fill the air and dark glossy Alders are here, there, and everywhere about ; when Duns without number and in varied shades of colour bring joy and delight to the heart of the angler ; when, too, the fairy May-fly, that 'frail and lovely thing, engendered by the sun,' appears in all its fragile beauty raising high the hopes of the youthful fly-fisher, and the counterfeit of which plays such dire havoc with the spotted population of the streams we love to fish ; and when later on the hum of the big brown sedge causes the lazy trout to wake up just when the sun is fast sinking in the west, and ordinary mortals are bethinking themselves of home, refreshment, and rest.

It is not under such delightful conditions as these that the grayling fisher wields his pliant wand and deftly throws the delusive fly. Not until 'teeming autumn big with rich increase' comes round is it that the thyme, violet, or cucumber-scented fish is ready for the true sportsman. The general chorus of summer songsters is sadly missed. Many have departed to far-off sunny climes. No longer is heard the thrilling melody of the nightingale, the 'seraph of the grove,' or the penetrating

notes of the cuckoo, that tyrannical bird so remiss in the discharge of its parental duties. Most of the friendly martins have left our shores. Stealthily like a thief in the night have the sandpipers taken themselves away while we slept, and the white-throats have quickly followed in their train. But there is still left to us the lark, which high in the air and poised upon its wings may be heard when the day is warm and bright. The ubiquitous and self-reliant sparrow twitters in the hedgerows and on the housetops. The cheery wren, that gem-like bird, gladdens one with its merry song, and the robin whistles from the garden croft. Frequenting mpses may be caught of the gorgeous kingfisher, whilst the thrush, blackbird, and other stay-at-homes have a right good time amongst the berried trees. Occasionally a wisp of snipe may be flushed in the water-meadows abutting upon the stream, whilst the 'pop, pop' of sportsmen's guns betokens that some speckled mallard, plump partridge, rocketing pheasant, or fleet-footed hare has made its last flight or run for life. The long days are passed,

The western sun withdraws the shorten'd day,  
And humid Evening, gliding o'er the sky  
In her chill progress, to the ground condensed  
The vapours throws.

Instead of sunshine and warmth, the seeker after grayling battles with the dreariness and barenness of winter. He sallies forth not clad in light, airy garments, but in thick vestments, for he knows that

There's not a flower on all the hills ;  
The frost is on the pane.

Is it this, I ask, which endears *Thymallus* so much to those happy beings who have access to rivers in which the fragrant fish is to be found? No, although in whatever guise or dress, Nature is always charming—in every season the lover of the beautiful will find scope for earnest thought and reflection, coupled with keen enjoyment—I opine that the secret of the great hold which grayling fishing takes upon one who has tasted its sweets lies mainly in the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to approach successfully this gamesome fish. Its caprice and fastidiousness know no bounds, but, as a set-off to this, its cupidity is equalled by no other variety of fish that I know of. Its whims and fancies are so singular, and its vagaries so well recognised and appreciated, that infinitely more zest is imparted to the pursuit of it than to any other of the finny inhabitants of the waters we love to visit. In every way it is a most tantalising fish, feeding when one least expects it to do so, and, *per contra*, ignoring the fly when wind, weather, and water appear to be absolutely favourable for sport.

But, after all, one obtains exercise for the body as well as for the mind, and food for quiet contemplation, whether grayling come well to the fly or are masterly inactive. Truly has Cervantes said that 'the bow cannot possibly stand always bent, nor can human nature subsist without recreation.' Grayling fishing in the dead months of the year is an incentive to recreation of the most agreeable and health-giving kind which can be wished for, clearing as it does the

brain of the cobwebs which have perchance accumulated through weeks of arduous work in that great city of bricks and mortar called London. Whether an expedition result in an empty bag or a creel half-full, or even filled to overflowing, one returns invigorated by the change, with no cramped limbs, which too often result from sitting on a stool the whole day long, endeavouring to beguile the wily roach, which refuses to be enticed, and thankful to the holy fathers—if, indeed, to them, the credit is due, which is believed by a few, but doubted by most, of introducing into our waters that lovely, graceful winter fish, the subject of the present volume.

I present this work to the grayling fishermen of the South Country, in the earnest hope that those amongst them who may find nothing new in it will be very kind to my virtues, a little blind to my faults ; and that the many who may as yet be on the threshold of the elegant art of catching grayling with the artificial fly may find some hints which may be of value to them and stand them in good stead, in the jottings which I have been able to piece together—coherently and intelligibly, I trust and believe—as the outcome of several years' painstaking and pleasant study of the fair and fickle grayling.

H. A. ROLT.

Wimbledon :  
*December 1901.*



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## CHAPTER I.

**NAME—ODOUR—DEFINITION OF WATER—THYME—DESCRIPTION—INTRODUCTION—SUITABLE RIVERS—FORMATION—SHAPE AND APPEARANCE—HABITS OF GRAYLING AND TROUT COMPARED—WEEDING PROCLIVITIES—COLOUR—SPAWNING PERIOD—GROWTH OF FRY—SEASON.**

THE GRAYLING is known by several names, grayling or greyling, umber or umbra, and *Salmo Thymallus*. With regard to the first, Pennell says that 'its familiar name greyling is probably a modification of "grey lines," having reference to the longitudinal dusky blue bars with which its body is marked;' while Mr. Manley, in his excellent work, 'Fish and Fishing,' says this: 'I have a secret doubt whether the colour gray has anything to do with the name of the fish at all, and question whether we must not search for some root *gr* or *gra* to account for its nomenclature.' As to the designation umber or umbra, Day tells us that by some it is supposed to be called after the River Humber, in Yorkshire. Ausonius thus speaks of the grayling:—

The bright scaled umber, as it passes by,  
Flits as a shadow o'er the gazer's eye.

It has been called the 'shadow fish,' too, from its swift swimming, or gliding out of sight, 'more like a shadow or a ghost than a fish.' Cotton's opinion is that the fish is named grayling by reason of the black or shadowy spots on its belly, and to the black colour of its head when out of season, although the fish is in its primest condition when its back and head are very dark. The French seem to favour the 'shadow' theory, for they have a proverb which runs, '*Il a fui comme un ombre*,' *l'ombre commun* being their appellation for the fish. The classical name, *Salmo Thymallus*, owes its being to the Roman poet Decius Ausonius, and, as every grayling fisher knows, it is in connection with the fragrance emitted by a freshly caught grayling, supposed by a great stretch of imagination to be similar to that of water thyme. Walton says: 'Some think that he feeds on water thyme and smells of it at his first taking out of the water, and they may think so with as good reason as we do that our smelts smell like violets at their first being caught, which I think is a truth.' What water thyme is I was somewhat puzzled to know. The view of the Editor of *The Gardeners Chronicle*, to whom I addressed a query on the matter, is that 'what Walton meant was probably the water moss (*Fontinalis antipyretica*). Nowadays the name is sometimes given to the troublesome Canadian water weed (*Elodea Canadensis*) which has been introduced within our own times.' St. Ambrose of Milan spoke of the grayling as the flower fish or flower of fishes, and with the Saint I

leave this much-debated point of the origin of the name of the graceful grayling.

Every angling writer I have read sings loud the praises of the grayling. Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, in 'The Sporting Fish of Great Britain,' says it is of delicate and graceful symmetry, and has an Apollo cast of beauty, and in the Badminton Library he describes the appearance of a grayling in these flattering terms: 'The back is of a deep purple or claret colour, with small dark irregular spots on the sides; the stomach is brilliantly white with a fringe or lacing of gold, and the tail, pectoral and ventral fins are of a rich purplish tint. The dorsal fin is very large—almost disproportionately so—and is covered with scarlet spots and wavy lines upon a ground of reddish brown. The little "velvety" back fin near the tail is also dark brown or purple, and the whole body is shot with violet, copper and blue reflections when seen in different lights.'

One would have thought that Dame Juliana Berners would have had a good deal to say on the subject; but, on the contrary, the description of the grayling in her quaint book is confined to a few lines. She suggests nothing better for 'baytes' than grubs and 'redde wormes and grene wormes.' The good Dame, however, praises the fish in this wise: 'It is a delycyous fyssh to manys mouthe,' which is something, at all events.

It is unnecessary to refer at length to the romance and mystery which attaches to the introduction of the grayling into English waters—if it really was

introduced into this country. Many suppose that it is to the monks that we owe the fish, but this is open to grave doubt. Mr. Senior, speaking at the annual dinner of the Gresham Society in 1901, said that he was inclined to think that it was one of the indigenous species of British fishes. Francis Day, in his work 'The Fishes of Great Britain,' while stating the generally accepted view that monks were responsible for its presence in English waters, adds that it would be difficult to convey the fish from the Continent with the means available hundreds of years ago. Beyond this he expresses no definite opinion upon the matter. For our purpose it is enough to know that the grayling inhabits many English and a few Scotch rivers in great numbers. It helps the fly-fisher materially to tide over the dead season during which trout are rightly allowed to rest. Efforts have been made to plant it in various streams in recent years. The Colne seems to be in some respects the *beau idéal* of a grayling stream. It has smooth glides and alternate deeps. At a first glance it appears just the place in which they would get on, but—and a big, big 'but'—the fatal objection to so delicate a fish succeeding is the presence of foreign matter in the water, it being a *sine qua non* with grayling rivers that the water should be pure.

The late Dr. Brunton mentioned, and the statement is supported by a former keeper of the fishery, that grayling were planted in the Uxbridge part of the Colne, that known as the Weir fishery, rented

by the Piscatorial Society. They have disappeared, however, through the pollution, which, I am bound to say, has to a great extent been remedied in recent years. Trout can and do survive, but their weaker brethren, the grayling, go to the wall. An attempt was made many years ago to acclimatise grayling in the Beane above Hertford, when, if I remember aright, fry were put in, with the result that the experiment failed, although we do occasionally hear of fish being killed. In March of the present year (1901) a 12-ounce fish was caught by Hertford, and the capture was duly chronicled in the *Anglers' News*. Numbers were put in the Thames, but they have been almost lost sight of. I heard a rumour that one was taken this year at Molesey, but have not been able to obtain corroboration of the fact.

The river in which the grayling does best is one having a cool temperature, neither too warm nor too cold. According to Ronalds, 'the water in which he thrives may be either clear or discoloured, but a peculiar formation of the bed of the current seems to be required, his favourite streams having now somewhat shallow and rapid, then long, slow running deep tracts, in which latter place he poises himself about three or four feet below the chain of insects coming down.' Or to quote the late Dr. Brunton: 'The grayling dearly loves a cool, clear river, not too swiftly flowing, abundant in deep pools and long shallows, and whose bed, composed of loamy stuff, is uneven, thereby making convenient holes for cover. It must be plentiful in flowing weeds, and,

while in its course it meanders through rich meadows, has its banks adorned with luxurious grass and wild flowers, and its surface now and again "o'er-hung with wild woods thick'ning green," exuberant in foliage and bloomin—amply suggestive of plenteous food and opportunity for partaking of it.'

The Itchen is the picture of a perfect grayling water. Here is found a pure river never coloured—except by road water, which quickly runs off—abounding in sharp runs, smooth glides, deep holes and channels. Here and there are eddies, formed by depressions in the banks, where large grayling are invariably at home. There are broad shallows, over which

The current with gentle murmur glides,  
Making sweet music with th' enamelled stones.

The stickles are full of fish—for the most part, small one- and two-year olds—but the deeper water at the tail ends of the shallows contains heavy specimens. In the Kennet one finds the same class of water, although the Berkshire grayling cannot be compared, either as regards symmetry or colour, to the Test fish. At Hungerford, a noted place on the former river, one sees beautifully oily flats, comparatively rapid runs, and slow deep water, with many broad shallows. The grayling, indeed, have increased and multiplied to such an extraordinary extent in this locality that the lessees of the fishery are seriously considering the advisability of removing them for the benefit of the trout, which are exceptionally numerous in this grand stretch of the lovely Kennet.

The grayling is essentially a nondescript, and has many peculiarities which observant folk cannot fail to have observed. What does the fish resemble? Looking at it as a whole, it distinctly favours the barbel and dace. The mouth with the overlapping top lip is particularly barbel-like. The smaller grayling might well be taken for dace. They are without spot, are as bright as a bar of silver, and rise more freely than their larger brethren. The adipose fin stamps a grayling as belonging to the salmon family. It has, however, a smaller head and mouth than the trout, and its teeth are in the throat. But the *pièce de résistance*, if the expression may be permitted, of a grayling is its huge dorsal wing-like fin, marked like a piece of tortoise-shell. This reminds one of our friend the striped perch. It possesses a grace and elegance of outline surpassed by no other fish that swims. It has, as I have already mentioned, an unusual scent when caught. 'Thymy' has been the description of it, but if one had said that the smell was like unto that of cucumber I should have been inclined to agree. I have failed to discover any thymy scent about the fish, but an unmistakable odour of the succulent cucumber obtains. Its tail is forked, whilst that of the trout is slightly convex, so that it can readily be identified when seen in the water. It is spotted like a trout, but the spots are jet black instead of rich brown or crimson, and it has an unique advantage over the trout in that it comes into season when its relative's beauties are on the wane. The trout has keen eye-

sight, as every angler will admit, but the grayling's visual organs are of the strongest. The pupil of the eye is shaped like a lozenge, the eye itself being of liquid depth. An old American angling writer, Uncle Thad Norris by name, makes this waggish remark anent the grayling's eye: 'When I look into a grayling's eye I am sorry I killed it, but that feeling never prevents me from making another cast just to see if another fish will rise'; and Fred Mather speaks of the fish as having a 'beatific countenance.'

So much for the appearance of the fish. All its movements, too, are strange and odd. Look at the manner at which it rises to the fly. It is not every fisherman who can tell the difference between the rise of a grayling and that of a trout. Of course it is easy to do so when it makes a head and shoulder rise, as it will sometimes when feeding upon Mayflies or duns, but when it is taking midges or something off the surface of the water which the eye cannot detect there is only a very slight break discernible. I think if one were to stand by a grayling river and carefully notice a grayling and then a trout rise he would soon learn to distinguish one from the other. The trout, as a rule, shows dash in its rise. It is sharp and well-defined, but not so with the grayling. It frequently scarcely breaks the surface, and sometimes sucks down the tiny morsels upon which it is feeding, leaving a ring of only the smallest character. At other times its rise will consist—and this really is what it generally amounts to—of what

I may term a spreading kind of rise, which will bring about a disturbance of the surface totally unlike that caused by a trout. Often, too, bubbles are noticed like those occasioned by a bream priming. But a pretty sure indication of the presence and rise of grayling is this: grayling, when moving at surface food, will continue to rise, and as they are sociable and gregarious—not lonely and solitary fish like the trout—several will rise at the same moment, and a stretch may be dotted over with dimples. The size of the break is no criterion of the largeness of the fish. The big wary grandfathers frequently make the least fuss, so that it is not wise to pass by a seemingly small rise. Although occasionally 'travelling' trout will be met with, it will, on the contrary, frequently happen that the angler will find grayling move their position when on the feed. They do not invariably remain in the same spot, but will journey slowly up stream, taking flies off the surface on their way. They can, of course, be easily followed, the tell-tale rings, when they rise, indicating quite clearly their whereabouts.

Again, the tendency of grayling is to drop down stream except at the spawning period in April, when they will travel up a long way to reach suitable quarters for depositing their ova. On the Lambourn it is a wonderful sight to stand on Shaw bridge, not far from the town of Newbury, and take a look at the big fish to be seen working up the shallows. The bottom of the river is literally black with them. Some large trout are always in attendance, and, as

they are not averse to eating their own ova, it is no wonder that that of *Thymallus* forms one *plat* in the bill of fare which they discuss when they have an opportunity afforded them for so doing. A trout, on the contrary, will not drop down, if I except *Salmo Irideus*, or the Rainbow trout, about the habits of which little, after all, is really known. I do know, however, that in one part of the Kennet a number of big fish were planted. For a few weeks thereafter they were not only seen but caught with the fly, yet in three months' time they had all vanished into thin air. None have been taken above where they were first placed, and the inference, naturally, is that they have gone southwards, and, perhaps, by this time are well on their road to the North Sea *via* old Father Thames. This, however, by the way. Trout when they have once risen to a fly will rarely come again, but the fact of a grayling failing to take the lure at the initial attempt does not at all militate against it having a second, third, or fourth try. It refuses to be put down, and by sticking to a rising fish it will generally be secured if one has to cast a dozen or more times over it. If a trout refuse a well-cocked fly at the first or second cast one may feel assured that it will not rise to the occasion, and may be left to be operated upon later on. The first thought a trout seems to have on being hooked is to endeavour to weed the angler; a grayling seldom acts in this fashion. Only once have I had the experience of being inextricably weeded by a grayling, but on this

occasion it bolted head first into a huge patch of aquatic vegetation, and it was not until the keeper came upon the scene with a long bamboo pole used in connection with pike snaring that he managed to fairly poke the fish out of the mass of weeds, and I eventually landed it.

The colour of the grayling, as Dr. Hamilton, in his 'British Fishes,' observes, depends a good deal upon the nature of the water. Compare a fish from the Test with one from Hungerford. The former is a bright, light-coloured specimen, and retains its colour after its demise. In the Kennet and Lambourn a fish lacks plumpness—it is long and thin, and when dead turns an unwholesome-looking hue. In many cases spots are few and far between, and, curiously enough, these seem to disappear to a certain extent after the fish is dead. The sandy, gravelly soil of the Test and Itchen will account for the beauty of its fish, both trout and grayling. In some parts of the Lambourn and Kennet, however, there is too much mud, which affects the colour of the fish, and brings about that dirty appearance they assume a short time after being killed. Grayling spawn about the end of April. They do not make redds like a trout or salmon, but deposit their ova on the gravel near the tails of shallows.

The ova is smaller than that of the trout, and, according to Day, is of a 'white, opalescent, cornelian or deep orange colour.' The ova hatches out in a fortnight and the young fish grow rapidly, for in six months after spawning they are a little larger than

a minnow, say five inches. A one-year-old grayling is called a 'pink,' and has neither spots nor lateral lines which can be observed. A two-year-old fish will weigh four ounces and is called a 'shut' or 'shote' grayling. These have spots, but the lateral line is still poorly marked. They are non-spawners, as until they are three years old, when they attain the weight of half to three-quarters of a pound, they do not spawn. Then they are entitled to the name of grayling. Thereafter grayling are supposed to grow at the rate of a quarter of a pound per annum until they reach their maximum weight, which may be anything from a pound to five pounds. The fish get quickly over their spawning operations and may be taken in July, although August is quite early enough to commence angling for them.

Some of the early angling writers, however, appear to have had very erroneous ideas with regard to the proper grayling season. In the 'Compleat Angler' we find opposite expressions of opinion on this matter. Walton tells us that 'he is a fish that lurks close all the winter, but is very pleasant and jolly after mid-April, in May, and in the hot months. . . . He is not so general a fish as the trout, nor so good to eat or to angle for.' A little further on in the same work Cotton says this: 'The grayling is a winter fish. His flesh is even in his worst season so firm, and will so easily calver, that in plain truth he is very good meat at all times. . . . When in his perfect condition I think him so good a fish as to be little inferior to the best trout I ever tasted in

my life.' In the 'Gentleman's Recreation' (1697) it is stated that 'in the winter he absconds himself, but after April he appears abroad and is very game-some.' This would seem to be a sort of paraphrase of Walton's theory, but what would our Northern anglers say to it?

## CHAPTER II.

**AUTUMN AND WINTER SPORT—FISHING WITH THE FLY—FRENCH METHOD OF CATCHING GRAYLING—TACKLE.**

GRAYLING fishing is increasing greatly in favour and popularity in the South, and there is no doubt that it would be followed with still greater assiduity were the same opportunities open to those who reside below the Thames as are enjoyed by their more fortunate brethren in the Midland and Northern counties. Free water is practically an unknown quantity, and grayling fishing on such magnificent rivers as the Test, Itchen, and Avon is all in the hands of private persons. A portion of the Kennet is certainly available to the public by payment of a modest daily fee, but the last day of the year sees the end of the season in order that the spawning operations of the trout which throng its waters may not be unduly interfered with or disturbed.

The pursuit of the grayling is an autumn and winter pastime. True, on the authority of Cotton, the grayling is never so much out of condition as to be uneatable, yet few would care to substitute grayling for trout as one of the courses of the evening meal in the months of May and June,

let the Chef know his *métier* never so well. But a November or December grayling is a dish fit for kings, and is preferred for its flavour by many even to the Kennet trout, which has a reputation it would be difficult to equal from a gastronomic standpoint.

Grayling fishing begins in real earnest in September, when the trees are beginning to assume their fair livery of autumn, when the graceful birch and broad-leaved plane have not dropped a leaf, and the sturdy oak and rugged elm are as full of deep green foliage as they were at Midsummer—that period of the year so happily described by Keats as the

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness !  
 Close bosom friend of the maturing Sun ;  
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run ;  
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,  
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core.

But biting winds and heavy rainstorms quickly rob the trees of their leaves, they rapidly lose their beauteous dress, and are left bare and gaunt until Nature shakes off her wintry garb and the warm days of spring come round again to awaken their beauty and cause them to bud and blossom forth with renewed strength and vigour.

As the days shorten and the temperature decreases sport gradually improves. Copious rains impart freshness to the water, which, after a summer of drought, is much to be desired. Autumnal frosts kill off midges—those veritable pests to the fly fisher generally—and the rise of fly is confined to a

comparatively few varieties—hardy insects which, heedless of the cold, come out whenever there is a glimpse of sunshine to entice them. I know nothing more enjoyable than a day's grayling fishing on a bright December morning, when overnight the thermometer has dropped a few degrees below 32. In the morning the brown-tinted sedges sparkle and glitter in the sunlight until the warmth causes the tiny jewels with which the decaying and decayed sheaths are bedecked to vanish. On such a day grayling ought and generally do come well to the fly. The air is invigorating and healthful and sport is of the best. Olives will probably hatch out after mid-day, and a few of the exquisitely tinted pale blues may put in an appearance, so that the dry fly angler should have a splendid time of it. It is an ideal day, one the grayling fisher longs for eagerly but seldom obtains, unless perchance his time is his own and he can pick and choose when and where he shall fish, having no business cares or anxieties to keep his shoulder to the wheel. Such days are few and far between. Bad ones, on which only those with constitutions of iron would dream of venturing forth with a fly rod by the riverside, come all too frequently, and must be expected by the piscator whose hands are tied to a certain extent and whose opportunities are rare. He may, as I have done, journey miles to choice water only to find that fishing is well-nigh impossible. A howling gale may greet his arrival at the village inn, where, at any rate, he is assured of a hearty welcome and excellent cheer.

A deluge of rain may come down after he has wooed and won Morpheus. The heavy drops may patter against the windows of his quaint temporary home, and at daybreak the outlook may be about as miserable and depressing as can be well imagined. The wind may have got up and developed into a typhoon in miniature, low ominous water-laden clouds may be scurrying across the horizon, and prospects look of the gloomiest as far as weather is concerned. But he knows that in a chalk stream, if the rain only holds off, the river, which may have thickened perceptibly—too much so for the fly—will quickly clear and the grayling be on the look out for food. Clad from top to toe in waterproofed garments he will sally forth proof against the wet, and the chances are that if the water is not unduly opaque he will be rewarded amply for his pluck and persistence. He remembers rainy days when he has had to tie the cuffs of his macintosh tightly to his wrist to prevent the water from the rod trickling down his arm, and making things there most unpleasant and uncomfortable; he will not forget that on a certain memorable outing he had two or three brace of big fish to repay him for his trouble and discomfort. He will recall to mind a day when more than the half gale was blowing, when the surface of the river resembled a sea, and when he could only obtain a cast here and there, not on the choicest bits of the water. He will see in his mind's eye his champion grayling, an ounce over two pounds, taken on that awful day when he was as near to

being blown into six feet of icy cold water as possible. Let the weather be what it may he has come to fish, and fish he does, sometimes with good results, at others with indifferent luck, whilst yet again he may experience a real red letter time, for a brisk breeze materially assists him to fill his weather-beaten creel. The grayling fisher, by reason of the time of the year in which he pursues his sport, cannot be a butterfly angler. He knows what he may have to negotiate in the matter of weather, and makes his arrangements accordingly, accepting gratefully what the gods may please to send him like a true philosopher and Stoic.

The art of capturing grayling with the fly is immeasurably the most delightful mode of angling for this lovely and gamesome fish. I will not go so far as to assert that it is the most successful way of doing so, if one considers only the basket. On the contrary, as the season advances more are brought to the net with the aid of maggots, worms, and the 'grasshopper' than ever fall to the fly, however gracefully and deftly thrown. I do not urge that it requires less skill to inveigle the grayling by means of live baits, but fly-fishing is assuredly the more artistic method of approaching so beautiful a member of the *Salmo* family as *Thymallus*. As Doctor Bethune very quaintly puts it, 'An *angler* uses the finest tackle and catches fish scientifically with the artificial fly, and is mostly' (he does not say invariably) 'a quiet well-behaved gentleman. A *fisherman*,' he adds, with a touch of sarcasm, 'uses any kinds

of 'ooks and lines, and catches 'em any way ; so he gets them it is all one to him, and he is generally a noisy fellah—something like a gunner.' For myself I do not see why one should not just as well angle for grayling with a maggot as catch trout with a worm, or salmon with a prawn, particularly as at certain times it is almost hopeless to expect grayling to take a fly dry or wet. All the same I am bound to confess that I prefer stalking *Thymallus* with

. . . . the light dropping hackle,  
And the masterly cast, with the finest of tackle.

There is another way of catching grayling, to which I may allude *en passant*. Mons. M. B Poitevin, in his book entitled 'L'Ami du Pêcheur, after speaking of the long distances grayling will travel to reach their spawning grounds, and instancing the case of the grayling of the Ain, in the south of France, which he says will descend to the Rhône and ascend that river again a long way, even to the smaller streams rising in the Jura Mountains, adds, 'La London surtout semble être l'objet de leur prédilection. Les riverains de ce cours d'eau principalement les Génevois, ne sachant pas prendre l'ombre à la ligne, les tuent à coups de fusil.' Let me hope that by this time (the book was written in 1873) the Genevese have learned better manners, and, instead of shooting Mr. Francis' 'ladylike' fish with a gun and powder and shot, are angling for it artistically with built cane rods,

pump dressed lines, gossamer casts, and 000 flies !

On southern rivers bottom fishing for grayling is neither recognised nor allowed, so that in the present work it is intended to deal only with capturing grayling with the sunk and floating fly.

It is only necessary to say a very few words with regard to the tackle to be employed for grayling. The same rod and line which is used in the capture of trout will answer perfectly well. The rod, however, I prefer to be slightly more pliant than is affected when in quest of the 'gentleman of the river,' as a springy one is better suited to counteract the twisting and rolling play so characteristic of *Thymallus*. The cast, and especially the point or end link of gut, should be of the finest ; in fact, everything should be neat and slender, and not coarse and gross, when endeavouring to allure this elegant 'lady of the stream.' If thick gut is put on, a grayling will frequently be seen to rise towards the fly and double back without touching it, a pretty sure sign that the cast does not err on the side of thinness. Tinted gut is best for wet fishing, but the clear and transparent white article is, in the opinion of many capable anglers, preferable for dry fly work, being less visible when floating on the surface of the water than the shaded strands.

One word as to dress. I have actually seen a grayling fisherman attired in very light knicker-bockers, ditto Norfolk jacket, white straw hat, and

shirt collar and tie of the same hue, when the blazing sun was beating down upon a low water, the surface of which was as calm as a mirror. For a fly-fisher especially to don such a costume was, of course, ridiculous in the extreme, and it is not surprising that he returned with an empty basket. Sombre clothes are far and away the best to wear, and the colour should assimilate as far as possible with the general surroundings, green and brown shades being, perhaps, preferable to any others.

## CHAPTER III.

WET FLY FISHING—MANNER OF RISING—STRIKING  
—WORKING THE FLY—BEST RISING TIME—  
LEADING THE FLY—SINKING THE FLY—  
SCOTCH METHOD—DRY FLY FISHING—CASTING  
—FASTIDIOUSNESS.

GRAYLING can be caught with either the wet or dry fly, and the angler who is an adept at wet fly fishing has an immense advantage over the one who is above the employment of anything but the floating lure. I grant that it is far more artistic to fish dry, but here one is absolutely dependent upon a rise of fly. Ofttimes I have been out when rise there has been none, when grayling were plainly seen at the bottom of the river, but would not rise to surface food. All the same they were not averse to taking under water. Again, there have been occasions when it has been blowing so hard that any fly which hatched out was whisked away ere it could alight on the river. What under such circumstances was to be done? One thing and one only, and that was to fish wet; and let me in this connection say this, that it is not so easy as some might imagine to hook

a grayling fishing down stream, and why? Most fishermen know the peculiar manner in which a grayling takes a floating fly. It does not come up to it like a trout does, and retire backwards after annexing it. It rises, if I may be pardoned the expression, head over heels, its rise forming two-thirds of a triangle. It ascends one side—the fly we will say is at the apex—and descends the other, so that in wet fishing, when a rise is seen or a pluck felt, one naturally strikes, with the result that in many cases the hook is fairly pulled out of the grayling's mouth. This more particularly obtains if a grayling takes the fly when the latter has reached the end of its tether and is in a straight line with the rod top. It will be remembered that the line is absolutely taut, but by giving a gentle twitch either to the right or left one minimises the chance of dragging the fly away from the fish, and stands a better prospect of driving the steel home. Frequently one does not see the rise at all, but trusts to the sense of feeling in striking. A slight pull may be noticed, making one think that there has been a weed bite. But the grayling fisher will strike at the faintest semblance of a stoppage or hang up, or if there is a dimple or swirl in the water near his fly, assuming he is not fishing an eddy, and in nine cases out of ten will find that the momentary arrestation was caused through a grayling taking the fly unnoticed. On a river like the Itchen I have made the keeper open his eyes in wonderment at big bags I have made with a wet fly. Here everyone swears by the dry article,

and the result often comes about that with 'floaters' sport late in the season is often very poor as compared with that obtained by fishing wet. The plan I adopt is to stroll quietly down stream. I first find my fish. Grayling keeping generally in shoals this is no difficult matter. Their whereabouts will soon be discovered, for in the crystal clear water of a well-kept chalk stream almost every stone on the bottom can be seen ; even in a weedy stream there is no difficulty in spotting the fish, especially when one knows the likely places to look for them. If the fish are not scared, an unlikely result, preparations may be made to attack them. I cast a fairly long line, sum up the whole stock of my patience, and commence work. I may cast a dozen times, and even more, without attracting the attention of the fish, but in the end I seldom fail to get some of them. I have taken them as early as eight o'clock in the morning and as late as four o'clock in the afternoon on a winter's day. One should never despair. If they will not take early in the morning they will assuredly feed some time while the light holds. I recollect being on a water the whole of one day last February. I fished hard and carefully from nine till four and took only a couple of small fish. They would not deign to look at any fly I offered them, big or little, wet or dry. As a last resource I walked up to the top of the water I was on, where I knew there were some good fish. Suddenly they began to take, and out of one run, not more than 100 yards long close to the bank, I extracted three or four brace of good grayling,

some weighing 1 lb. 12 oz. and one beauty going 2 lbs. 1 oz.

It goes without saying that there is considerably more scope in wet fly fishing for the exercise of one's ingenuity than in the more artistic style. With the dry fly one can only cast above a rising fish. The fly floats down and the grayling either takes or leaves it—too frequently the latter. The feather and tinsel creation is without life, but with a sunk fly the case is altogether different. Let me refer for a moment to the various ways of fishing it that I know of. The most common, naturally, is to cast straight across stream (not up, simply for the reason that if a grayling takes it the rise will, in all probability, neither be seen nor felt) and let it swing gently round with the current, following its course with the rod. If the fish refuses it used in this fashion it should be slightly worked by raising the tip of the rod an inch or two, something after the manner one does when working small salmon flies for trout. Failing this, it should be drawn somewhat quickly through the water, then slowly, then in jerks with stoppages in between, causing the hackle to expand and contract—all sorts of devices, after the style I have indicated, will occur to the wet fly fisher. In fact, one must change one's tactics as often as a fox, and have as many wiles as a poacher. When trying for grayling which are sulking in holes one may even go to the length of putting a shot on the line to facilitate the lure getting near the bottom. John Bickerdyke

suggests this in his book, 'Angling for Game Fish.' Although grayling will not go to the trouble of rising five or six feet from the bed of the river to take a fly, if the latter can be brought close to them they will occasionally take it. As an old keeper once said to me, 'If you can only get the fly down to them, they will have it,' and, sure enough, I have more than once proved the truth of this assertion. A better plan, however, than this shooting business, which I do not like, I have hit upon, and it is this: when dressing a fly, I pad the hook slightly with thin lead wire—not too much of it—a couple of turns is ample. I then make the fly upon this foundation, and when it is finished one cannot, of course, tell, except by the fly sinking better, and making, perhaps, a little—very little—more disturbance when alighting upon the water, that there was any lead in its composition. This, to my mind, is preferable to having a shot on the line, which is an eyesore, and is really more effective, as there is no angle formed between the hook and the shot, and again between the shot and the rest of the cast above it. It may be only a slight angle, but it is an angle nevertheless, and may possibly affect the successful striking of a fish, or even feeling a rise in time to strike.

I have gone pretty fully into the course to be pursued in connection with wet fly fishing, so that there is little more to be said on this head. In the South it is customary to employ one fly only. The Scotch fishermen of the Clyde and Tweed—those, I

mean, who get their living at it—use, as Mr. G. J. Chatterton so ably explained in a Lecture he delivered on Grayling before the members of the Piscatorial Society on the last day of the past century, a rod  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, with a tapered horse-hair line, and a gut cast at the end of this, 50 feet long in all, no winch, and 9 flies. This way of fishing was graphically described and illustrated by the gentleman named. French fishermen in the Ain have from 8 to 10 flies on their cast—flies which, a French writer tells us, are of bright and gaudy colours, and resemble no living creature on the earth or in the water beneath it. Yorkshire anglers are content with three or four flies, but Test, Itchen, and Kennet anglers depend upon one fly. All grayling streams in the southern counties are more or less weedy, some very much so. In working, therefore, with a single fly there is no danger when a fish is hooked of the line becoming entangled in the weeds or hung up during the play of the fish, with the possible result of a break and loss of the prize. There is every probability of this happening—as a heavy fish frequently bolts and bores, and has to be dragged through aquatic vegetation, which could hardly be done unless the angler was especially lucky—if there are several flies dangling above the fish. Grayling do not, however, endeavour to weed one as a trout will do. One fly is ample in rivers in the southern counties—I know that there are many glides and clear spaces where

three or four might be employed without danger being apprehended from hangs up, but one fly in capable hands will pay quite as well as if a small string were utilised. I once used a cast of three flies on the Itchen, more for the purpose of ascertaining what the fancy of the grayling was on the particular day I fished than with the idea of creeling a leash at one cast. What was the result? I rose a good fish and hooked it on the tail fly. There was the usual play for a brief while, sufficient to indicate that I was into something worth transferring to the bag. Then there was a stoppage, and the weight of the fish increased by a hundred per cent. Soon I found that I was fast into a weed as well as a grayling, but, by putting on all the strain I dared, I was fortunate enough to loosen the weed, which, with the 1 lb. 12 oz. fish, I safely netted shortly after. The first dropper was the delinquent, and had the grayling not been firmly hooked the hold would undoubtedly have given way. This was my first and last experience with a three-fly cast.

Let me refer now to what is termed the more 'gentlemanly' way of fishing for grayling—viz., with the dry fly. I will assume that a grayling or a shoal of grayling has been seen to rise. If there is any fly hatching out and coming down, and the angler is not certain in his own mind as to the pattern, let him ask the keeper to secure a sample by means of the landing-net, or catch one himself if

he has no 'gillie' to attend to his wants. One of the same size and shade of colour as near as may be should be affixed to the point, and the cast made well above the fish, a very necessary procedure when dry fly fishing for grayling, seeing that they have to ascend a long way sometimes from the bottom, not being poised just below the surface like a trout. Of course, drag is fatal to success. If the fly falls properly cocked—say three feet above a fish—and the line does not land in beautiful but useless coils, but is straight with the rod top, a grayling when it takes the fly will as often as not hook itself, without any movement on the part of the fisherman. Hence the advice of many grayling fishers not to strike at all when a fish rises. In regard to striking or not striking at a rise, I know that there are some who strongly advocate that the angler should allow a grayling to hook itself, no response being given by the man at the end of the rod when a fish takes the fly. It is not everyone who can calmly see a big grayling come up and suck down an olive or iron blue without striking. It seems against the natural order of things for one to remain passive under such circumstances. I have tried striking and not striking, and am bound to confess that I have no faith in the latter mode of procedure. It seems to me far preferable to strike gently because of the slender tackle employed (not that I am a believer, but quite the reverse, in the tender mouth theory, of which more anon), play the fish quietly, and land it by

means of a net, not lift it out of the water with the hand, as one very successful grayling fisher I have met, clinging to old-time ideas, continues to do in this present year of grace.

It does not, however, follow as an invariable rule that a grayling will accept the fly presented to it, for when I have attempted to rise them with what I have imagined to be a correct copy of the original I have frequently failed to do so, and have substituted for it a fly of a totally different pattern, with excellent results. The grayling is particularly fastidious in the matter of fly, but patience and change of pattern will generally enable one to succeed in making a fair if not heavy basket. The dry fly cannot travel too slowly down stream. In clear water it is exceedingly interesting to watch the antics of a grayling ere he takes a fly. One may be seen rising, say, ten yards above the angler, and the latter will naturally cast for it. Every movement of the fish can be clearly observed in the crystal stream. The fly will alight a yard above the rising fish, and come slowly down over it. It may and probably will take no notice of it the first time it passes by—it all depends upon the humour it is in. But one may distinctly see the waggle of its tail, showing that it was getting somewhat excited as the lure came quietly towards it. Several times this may occur until finally the grayling will be observed to take still more interest in the matter as the fly approaches it, and when it is within reach will suddenly dart up at it; then the fun should or ought

to begin. A grayling rises very rapidly, coming up like a flash from the bottom, and if it misses the fly glides back as a shadow. As Day tells us, 'its back fin, aided by its well-developed air bladder, would seem to show that its formation is that best adapted for rapidly rising or sinking in the water.'

## CHAPTER IV.

**MISSING THE FLY—HOOKS, SIZES OF—TENDER MOUTH—PLAY OF A GRAYLING—DEADHEARTEDNESS—FOUL HOOKING—PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE—CONTINUOUS RISING—CAUGHT WITH FLY IN ITS MOUTH—MIDGING—‘NOSING’ THE FLY—SURFACE BREAK.**

GRAYLING will miss the fly frequently, and the reason for this is not far to seek. They have to come up from the bottom of the river, and the depth from which they have to rise to take a fly causes them to miscalculate the distance. Mr. F. M. Hal-ford says in this connection that the faster the fly travels the more likely the grayling is to miss it; so long as it does not drag it is impossible for it to go too slowly. Hence the necessity of, and the reason for, casting well above a fish. The grayling does not come boldly to meet a fly as a trout does, and seldom rises to it until it is close to it, the peculiar shape of the mouth—the top lip projecting over the lower one—necessitating its rolling over the fly, as it were, in order to suck it in. It is always best, when a grayling is hooked, to lead it carefully

down stream, so that the remainder of the shoal may not be frightened. This applies to dry fly fishing. In the case of the wet fly it should be got away from its neighbours as soon as possible, and in the meantime the fisherman should keep out of sight, and not go dancing about the bank, waving a landing net in his left hand. He can play the fish in a recumbent position, and net it without being seen by the rest of the shoal.

In connection with hooking grayling the question naturally arises, what size hooks to select. I know that it sounds very nice to tell a brother angler that you killed a 2-lb. fish on a 000 bumble or Wickham and a gossamer point. I grant this, but I make bold to say that these almost invisible hooks are too small to hold so trying a fish as our friend. I remember the first time I went down to a famous grayling river the keeper looked perfectly aghast when I proposed to use a wet fly on a No. 2 hook. To humour him, and against my own inclination, I for the moment put up one of the smallest-sized. The grayling were evidently taking well under water, though there was nothing to be seen in the way of a rise. What was the result? It was an October day and a grand one for sport. The first grayling I had on I had to drag through a weed bed, and lost it in endeavouring to perform the feat. The next fish came unstuck, and a third one followed suit, when I imagined I had killed it. Then I thought it high time to gang my ain gait. I changed for a No. 2, and I took that day five or six

brace of good fish with various patterns of wet flies, principally of the tag kind. I urge, therefore, that, by using 00's even, more fish are lost than are basketed. I am aware that there are some anglers who are satisfied, or say they are, if they rise a fish only; others are happy if they hook one and get a certain amount of play out of it; but I confess I am one of those individuals who like to carry home a brace or two of grayling after travelling dozens of miles to fish for them. Of course, when recourse is had to a dry fly it would be not only useless but the height of absurdity to put up, say, an iron blue on a No. 1 hook, or a pale olive on a No. 2. One must of necessity have the imitation about the size of the natural insect it is intended to represent. But when a wet fly is relied upon the case is different. In some rivers big grayling do not evince a predilection for floaters, and rise very badly; if I mistake not the majority of heavy fish are killed by the wet method (I am not alluding here to the May-fly period, when large grayling rise freely—to the angler's disgust—at huge patterns of this beautiful fly). If one is on a water when the surface is well rippled the wet fly—and a good big one—will rise a better class of fish than small olives or other patterns floated over them. This assertion is borne out by so eminent an authority as John Bickerdyke in his admirable work of which I have before spoken. I have caught many grayling on tiny hooks when fishing dry, but I am not infatuated with them, and certainly do not employ them if I can get them to look at bigger

ones. I have no confidence in them, for I generally manage to lose more fish than I land with them. I hooked and lost the biggest grayling I ever had on in my life on a No. 000 hook, which still further makes me look with disfavour upon the microscopical mites some affect. I am sure, too, that if grayling fishermen generally were to employ larger hooks one would hear less about the mouth of the fish being tender.

I have consulted many angling writers, from Cotton upwards, and without exception all refer to the grayling's mouth being fragile. I rather think myself that it is the hook which is at fault. A smelt's mouth is certainly tender in the extreme. When fishing for them with rod and line I have found them drop off whilst carefully lifting them out of the water. But I do not hold that the mouth of a grayling is as weak as has been generally asserted to be the case. How many trout, I would ask, are scratched when using 000 flies? Yet no one asserts that the trout's lips are tender. The grayling has a leathery rim round its mouth; when fully expanded—I allude to the mouth of a pound and a-half fish—it measures over an inch across, so that there is no question about it being too small to accommodate a No. 2 or larger hook. In fact, one gets them on May-flies, as I have said, dressed on No. 4's, and that extraordinary production termed the 'grasshopper,' a wonderful creation of straw and green and white worsted, with a leaded body on a hook still larger.

Dr. Brunton favoured hooks of fair size, and his experience in many waters went to show that the bigger the hook the better the fish. The use of very tiny hooks does not give the angler a fair chance, for the tactics of a grayling are quite unlike those of any other fish that swims. The play of a hooked grayling tries the tackle to the uttermost. This is the way it generally sets to work to set itself free. One feels first of all a dead pull, then the grayling bores to the bottom something after the manner of a barbel. Sometimes (this in the case of heavy fish) it will rush up or down stream, rolling about in any weeds there may be near, and perhaps show an extraordinary ability for masterly inactivity, as one writer puts it. Dr. Richardson says that it springs out of the water when first hooked, but only on two occasions has this happened to me. Its endeavours seem rather to get free by plunging and twisting play, and tugging or nagging at the line like a dog gnawing a bone. This continued twisting and jiggering play bodes ill for the consummation of the capture. Many a grayling is lost through a final rush it makes when it catches sight of the landing net. It is like a chub in this respect; it makes a sudden burst when it is least expected, and when one congratulates oneself that the worst is over.

Describing the play of a hooked grayling, an American sportsman, Professor Milner, says this: 'Hooking a large grayling I had good evidence of his plucky qualities. The pliant rod bent as he

struggled against the line, curling his body round columns of water that failed to sustain his grasp, and setting his great dorsal fin like an oar, backing water while we cautiously worked him in, his tender mouth requiring rather more careful handling than would be necessary for a trout; making a spurt up stream he requires a yielding line, but after a time he submits to be brought in, rallying for a dart under the boat or beneath a log as an attempt is made to place the landing net under him.'

Cotton in his quaint work says that the grayling gives poor sport; he states that it is one of the deadest-hearted fish in the world, adding, 'the bigger he is the more easily is he taken.' Both statements are utterly at variance with the experience of the present-day fisherman. Ronalds, on the contrary, urges that the grayling is excellent for sport, and Mr. Senior has a good word to say in favour of the sport given by it. If you hook a big grayling—say a two-pounder—in a sharp stream on a smallish hook with a gossamer point, all I can say is, look out for squalls; I would rather tackle a three-pound Kennet trout any day than a grayling half the size in the Itchen. It may be when one catches them in May-fly time, when they have only just done spawning, that they are somewhat dull in their play, but an October or November fish is a different article altogether. I once hooked a grayling in the dorsal fin. This was at Hungerford, and the fish rose at a small Furnace bumble. It was a head

and shoulder rise, and upon the fish being hooked it rushed down stream, then shot off in the direction of the opposite bank, and I could do nothing with it. I thought it was a monster, as I did not see the fish and was not at the moment aware that it was hooked foul. I could not understand its play for the life of me, and imagined it to be a grand fish. Thrice I got it within a foot of the net, but each time it darted away. At last I landed it, and discovered the fly firmly embedded in the base of the large back fin. The grayling had apparently missed the fly, and in going head over heels down to the bottom caught it in its descent. It was a pound and a-half fish and took me fully five minutes to bring to bank.

A word as to patience and perseverance. If the grayling fisher does not possess these two very necessary and essential attributes he had better confine himself to some other sport than angling. One day when I was at Hungerford I tried for an hour over a fish, or rather a shoal of fish, and got one at last, and this is the way I did it. I had on a small green insect with a red tag attachment, and was fishing it dry. I had taken a few small fish in the morning, and journeyed towards the stile by the well-known Wine Cellar, intending to have an *al fresco* lunch and smoke the pipe of peace thereafter. I sat on the step, and looking towards the old plank bridge which formerly stood there I espied a dozen grayling in mid-stream. There is no doubt they saw me too, for the water was very low and bright and the sun was scorchingly hot. I thought I

would see if I could tempt them with the fly. I did not begin to cast immediately, for I remembered a tale told me some years ago by a noted fly-fisher of a visitor on the same water. The latter saw a fish rise below him, and walked down to it. He stood quite still opposite to where the grayling broke the water. He did not try for it, although the fish rose again and again. At last the first-named gentleman asked in a loud tone why he did not cast. The stranger replied that he was waiting for the fish to get used to his presence on the bank. The fish got too much accustomed to it, for at the very first throw the grayling was creeled. To return to the stile. I sat and watched the shoal for a couple of minutes. Not a fin stirred. I then began to cast sideways, so that the rod did not go over the water. I made as little movement as possible. A dozen times the fly went over the group without any notice being taken of it. I had hoped they might think it was ground bait coming down and ultimately sample it. Old David Foster called attention to this matter years ago, and said the theory was accredited that the constant passage of a fly over the nose of a grayling acted as a sort of ground bait in exciting the attention of the fish. But, whether this is so or not, grayling by perseverance are to be taken with a fly when they are not feeding in the common acceptance of the word. But to continue my tale. I rested awhile and cast again. I thought the hindermost fish in the shoal seemed to wriggle its tail (in derision or otherwise), and get a little uneasy and

excited as the red, green, and blue nondescript passed over it, like a coy maiden blushing and drooping her eyes ere she gives a reply to the momentous question which has been asked her by her attendant swain. I singled this particular one out for the principal object of my attack. The next time the fly went over it it moved its whole body, then it rose halfway and returned. I waited another few seconds and cast again. The grayling could not make up its mind to have it, for, although it came up to the fly and apparently examined it, it went no further. Another wait and another cast. This time there was no half-heartedness about the rise. The tail I could see wriggling when the fly was fully two feet from the fish. It came up like a flash to meet it, and I soon had one of the nicest 1 lb. 12 oz. grayling in the creel I have caught in the Kennet. I was proud of that fish one may be well assured. Only lately, when walking up the Lambourn soon after eight, I espied opposite the stile close to the keeper's cottage some three or four grayling and one good trout. They were happy together, and were four yards away from the bank. They were not rising. I got quietly over the stile and sat down on the step. I had my rod in an upright position, and the fish must, of course, have seen me, but they did not shoot off. I thought I might have a cast on the chance of one of the grayling moving. I accordingly began switching the fly sideways—a wet one of my own manufacture. On the second cast I rose, hooked, and landed a grayling of a pound and

a-half. I resumed my seat and soon afterwards cast again. At the very first essay I killed a second grayling about the same weight. I followed this up with the trout, which I bagged also with the grayling fly—a nice pound and a-half fish. This all took place in the space of ten minutes, allowing for the slight pauses between the acts.

The knowledge that grayling will rise again and again to a fly which it may have missed is of much assistance to the beginner. T. F. Salter goes so far as to assert that they will even bite while a hook hangs loose in their mouths, which hook the angler may have lost a moment before. My own experience has most certainly been that when I have been broken in a grayling it scoots off for all that it is worth, and will not try a second edition of the fly behind which is the 'sharp and dreadful hook.' I never succeeded in getting a grayling to try a second time if I once pricked it even. But the presence of a fly which a brother fisherman may have lost—say the night before—is no deterrent to their rising at the same pattern next morning. I was fishing near Winchester some time ago. On the evening previous to my arrival my brother was broken by a big grayling, owing to striking it too hard with a stiff rod and a gossamer point. I knew where the fish was, and tried for it the next morning. Strange to say, I actually caught that self-same grayling with the fly hanging from its mouth. It seems from this episode that when a grayling has had time to get over its fright it will come again, but not directly

after it has been once hooked. Talking of wet-fly fishing, I would remark that when grayling are rising at the natural fly it is a mistake—nay, it is almost useless—to fish for them wet with a nondescript. I have tried on many occasions to catch them with a wet red tag, green insect, and bumble, when they have been taking black ants, pale olives, or iron blues, but could do little or nothing. They will seldom look at them when fly is on, so that it is unnecessary to urge that when fly comes up the wet style should be immediately abandoned and recourse had to the dry lure. Sometimes grayling rise exceedingly well, but at what puzzles everyone. There is no fly on the water which can be seen with the naked eye, and yet they come up again and again. Probably they are midging, and when they are doing this it is difficult to hit upon what they will take. Then I am compelled to use the smallest flies on 000 hooks. If I cannot rise them with a light fly—say a ginger or cinnamon quill—I try a pattern a shade or two darker, then the darkest fly I have, like the iron blue or black gnat. But it often happens that by the time one has discovered their particular fancy they have ceased to take on the surface.

They will often 'nose' the fly, as it is termed, and refuse to take it. What to do under such circumstances is to stick to the fish, and cast again and again, although it need hardly be said that it tries one's temper almost to the breaking point to find a grayling flirt with the fly in the objectionable manner referred to. But it is a way they have, and, being 'ladylike' fish, I presume they must be pardoned.

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Yet, like flirts of both sexes we meet with in every-day life, they sometimes play with edged tools once too often and meet their doom. When grayling are in this sportive mood all one can do is to persevere. A fish which is 'nosing' the fly will probably, though not certainly, be transferred to the basket. Change of pattern may effect this, or, if it is found that the fish plays with a fly dressed on a No. 0 hook, a smaller size should be tried of the same shade, or extremes of colour may be substituted not infrequently with advantage.

It is a peculiar fact that the bigger the fish the smaller the break of surface made by the rise. A curious thing happened to me one day at Hungerford. The fly I was using was a small green insect, and I was fishing it dry. Several fish were seen, and I cast over them. Of course, the green insect is a fly which stands out well while floating down, and can be readily seen. Strange to say, the fly disappeared without the least sign of a fish having risen, and then came up again. This went on once or twice, and puzzled me immensely. At last I suddenly remembered a brother piscator telling me that he had had exactly the same experience while fishing near Eddington bridge. His idea was that the grayling quietly sucked the fly under, and spat it out when the deception was discovered. The next time my fly vanished I struck, and the mystery was solved. I hooked and landed a pound grayling; but this, I am bound as a veracious chronicler to say, was the only occasion on which such a thing has happened to me.

## CHAPTER V.

**BEST FLIES AND DRESSINGS—YORKSHIRE FLIES—  
BUMBLES AND NONDESCRIPTS—FLOATING FLIES.**

THE question of what fly to use is an important one. The rule generally followed is to put up bright flies on sunny days and sombre ones on dull days, but grayling are so extremely fastidious and fickle that no absolute plan can be laid down. I would, however, make this reservation, viz., that when there is any rise of fly and the fish are taking them, that particular fly should as a general rule be used, or the basket will in all likelihood be light. Occasionally, however, grayling will take a fly quite different to the natural ones on the water. A great many Southern anglers swear by nondescripts and depend upon them for the allurement of the fish. They can be fished wet or dry, as fancy dictates, and will take sometimes used in one style and at others in the second way. A grayling is just like a descendant of Eve in the female line—it has a thoroughly effeminate appreciation of gaudy colours. Hence it arises that in many of the best killing flies one finds gold or silver tinsel, bright peacock herl, and ibis feather.

I have tried many of the North country hackle patterns like the 'poult blo,' 'waterhen blo,' 'blue hawk,' and 'Spanish needle,' but have never had any success with them. It may be that I had not had sufficient faith in their efficacy, but Mr. F. M. Walbran some time ago told me that he had found exactly the same thing—viz., that spider flies were almost useless on Southern rivers for grayling. It may be and probably is owing to the fact that, as compared with Yorkshire and Northern rivers, our chalk streams are slow running. Curiously enough, the Derbyshire bumbles, especially the orange one, take exceedingly well at times. They are well hackled, which may have something to do with this. However this may be, the fact remains that the great majority of the Northern patterns are useless on South Country rivers.

In treating of the best flies to use for grayling, it may be stated as a general principle that one cannot err very much in putting up a correct imitation of whatever may be on the water. It does not by any means follow, however, that the fish will take the counterfeit, so capricious are they in the matter of feeding, and so discriminating as to the pattern they favour. I have a lively recollection of a visit I paid to a Hampshire stream on a bright October day. Overnight there had been a somewhat sharp white frost, and the day was brilliantly fine, the sun shining too much, perhaps, to please the ordinary fly fisherman ; the water was of the clearest, necessitating the finest fishing possible. About mid-

day there was an extraordinary rise of fly, the like of which I have never seen before at the particular time of year spoken of. Pale olives came down in myriads, dark winged ones accompanying them. There were watery duns, iron blues, and in the afternoon a good sprinkling of light and dark sedges put in an appearance. One was rather in a quandary what fly to select. With the aid of a net I obtained several samples of the real insects, and worked with correct copies both as regards size and colour—size being a factor of the utmost importance in dry fly fishing at all times—but out of six brace of grayling I took during the time I was on the river only two brace fell to the floating article, the remainder having been killed before any fly hatched out, and after it had gone off, with sunk nondescripts. This was not at all surprising, for again and again, when casting over a rising fish where I had taken up my position, my fraudulent fly was accompanied on its trip down stream by four or five naturals, so that with such a sharp-eyed fish as the grayling the imitation stood but little chance of being selected. Four grayling, however, did make mistakes, to their final undoing. Had there been a better fishing rise my bag might have been a record one. This, however, by the way.

For ordinary work in the autumn months I should term the olive the sheet anchor of the grayling angler. If any fly comes out, one is almost sure to observe some of these delicate duns in different shades of colour. The iron blue is another pro-

nounced favourite with the grayling, which display a particular fondness for them, and take them with avidity. That prime favourite, Wickham's Fancy, is scarcely ever wrong, and when everything else fails often accounts for good sport. The brighter the day the better, and in a rousing wind it often does wonders fished wet. The gold-ribbed hare's ear stands high in the estimation of some, and heavy fish are taken with it. Red, claret, and sherry spinners will kill when properly presented, and small silver or dark sedges are often capital flies to have on at dusk. Aldam's Indian Yellow, a comparatively little used fly, does well on the Kennet at Hungerford, and the Little Marryat, that splendid imitation of the pale watery dun invented by Mr. Marryat, is in much request when light-coloured flies are on the water. Another fly I have found excellent, the name of which I have lost. It is made with a dark purple silk body, ribbed with fine gold wire, black hackle and whisk, and dark starling wings on a 00 hook. It resembles Broughton's Point to some extent, and does well in the month of September. After the first frosts have come, and have killed off the worrying midges, which cause the angler much vexation of spirit, the Grey Palmer and Apple-green Dun may be tried, generally with good results. The former is supposed to represent the house fly, which, having succumbed to the cold, falls upon the water. The 'Little Chap'—which in the North goes under the name of the 'Smoke Fly'—I have killed many grayling with, both early and late

in the season. In December, and on through the coldest months of the year, the range of flies is limited, for the rise is generally meagre. Olives will occasionally hatch out, but the Winter Dun is a sure fly to have on. It was a great favourite with old David Foster—than whom, perhaps, no better grayling fisher has ever lived—and has either a gold or a silver (flat) body; the dressing I give later on.

Amongst wet flies, which certainly yield better sport in the winter than dry ones—although I am not a 'one fly' man, and although, too, I do not desire to unduly blow my own particular trumpet—I would rather pin my faith to an improved or glorified green insect I have discovered. It has been named the 'Witch,' and with it I have killed more grayling than with any other nondescript or natural I have tried, the red tag not excepted. I dressed this fly early one autumn morning when paying a visit to a Berkshire trout and grayling stream; but, although I captured a brace and a-half of large grayling, the 'Witch' proved to be perfectly irresistible when offered to a trout. On a somewhat heavily fished water I landed in the course of the day six and a-half brace of trout, one being the champion fish of the season, and a brace and a-half of grayling—all on this particular pattern. Since then it has been tried with great success on other Southern rivers. The red tag is hard to beat, and runs the green insect or the 'Witch' very close. Marryat's dressing of it with a strand of macaw tail feather stripped and wound on the hook so as to show the blue and yellow

rings alternately with an ibis tag, I have not been particularly lucky with. Now and then Bradshaw's Fancy will take an odd fish, as will also a kind of mongrel Wickham—gold body, ibis tag, and bright red hackle at the head. The latter is an attractive fly, and is very effective on bright days. It is especially good in a low condition of water, and has helped materially to add to the weight of the basket.

With wet flies the great secret of success appears to me to be to sink them as much as possible; and the plan which I have adopted, and to which reference has already been made, of giving a couple of turns of thin lead wire round the bare hook previous to building up the fly, has proved of much service when searching deep holes. In shallow glides this padding is unnecessary, but the big grayling are, as a rule, found in the deep parts of the river, and as they, like the mountain, are very chary at coming to Mahomet, *alias* the piscator, Mahomet must perforce go to them. A fly which can be fished well down stands a far greater chance of being taken than one which is passing five or six feet over a grayling's head. The Derbyshire bumbles must not be lost sight of, for many a good fish has succumbed to the charms of the orange, yellow, and furnace patterns. I append the dressings of a dozen flies, wet and dry, favoured by South Country grayling anglers. It would be quite easy to eliminate half of these. Indeed, speaking for myself, I should be quite content to rely upon what I may term the 'matadors' amongst the whole catalogue of grayling flies—

the olive, Wickham's Fancy, the Witch, and the red tag.

1. *Olive Dun*.—Body, pale yellow silk, ribbed with fine white silk.

Hackle and whisk, pale olive dyed to match.

Wings, pale starling.

Hook, 0 and 00.

This may be dressed with a peacock quill body, in lieu of that of silk, many dry-fly men objecting to a silk body on the ground of its soon becoming saturated and militating against the fly cocking well. The colour, too, does not hold fast. With a quill body it, of course, becomes the Olive Quill.

2. *Cinnamon Quill*.—Body, peacock quill, bleached in dioxide of hydrogen.

Hackle and whisk, sandy ginger.

Wings, pale starling.

Hook, 0 and 00.

This is an excellent fly, particularly on the Itchen, and should always be carried right up to the end of the grayling season.

3. *Little Marryat*.—Body, fur from the flank of the Australian opossum.

Hackle and whisk, pale buff Cochin cock.

Wings, palest starling.

Hook, 00.

As a light-coloured fly this is probably unequalled. It has a great reputation in many waters, and when the pale, watery dun is coming down it is well taken. It is an invention of Mr. Marryat's, a prince amongst dry-fly fishers.

4. *Winter Dun*.—Body, flat gold or silver.

Hackle and whisk, light blue.

Wings, fieldfare.

Hook, 00.

On cold and frosty days this is generally a success. It was a great favourite with the late David Foster, of Ashbourne fame, who commended it before all fancy flies for the allurement of grayling. Indeed, throughout the season it is well worth a trial when fish are coming short at other patterns.

5. *Wickham's Fancy*.—Body, flat, gold ribbed with fine gold wire.

Hackle, bright red carried down the body.

Whisk, bright red.

Wings, pale starling.

Hook, 0 and 00.

If the angler fails to rise grayling with any other fly, and feels more than half-inclined to throw up the sponge, he generally puts up a Wickham as a last resource.

There is an old maxim amongst reporters, which says, 'When in doubt leave it out.' I would slightly alter this to suit fly-fishers, and say, 'When in doubt use a Wickham.' It is well worthy all the encomiums passed upon it.

6. *Apple Green*.—Body, apple green floss silk, not too dark.

Hackle and whisk, ginger.

Wings, light starling.

Hook, 00.

This is one of the best fancies, and can be hackled with an ash-coloured hackle for a change, as recommended by John Bickerdyke, in a recent number of the *Field*.

7. *The Witch*.—Body, bright green peacock herl from the sword feather, two or three strands twisted and ribbed with flat gold.

Tag, ibis.

Hackle, light honey dun.

Hook, 0 to 2.

This is an improvement upon the green insect, which is dressed, according to Mr. Halford, minus the tag and gold ribbing, and with a light blue hackle in lieu of the honey dun one. Dressed on a No. 000 hook it may be fished dry, especially when grayling are midging. Being well hackled it floats well with a little assistance from the brush of the paraffin bottle. As a wet fly it cannot be too highly recommended. In rough, windy weather trout take it well fished close to the bank and slightly worked.

8. *Red Tag*.—Body, copper-coloured peacock herl, two or three strands twisted.

Tag, scarlet wool or ibis.

Hackle, blood-red gamecock.

Hook, 0 to 2.

For dace and grayling this is well known as a capital fly, so that praise of it would be like gilding gold. A golden plover hackle may be substituted for the red one, and dressed in this way and ribbed with flat or twisted gold I have killed many a grayling and trout as well.

9. *Orange Bumble*.—Body, orange floss silk, ribbed with a strand of peacock's sword feather and fine flat gold.

Hackle, honey dun carried right down the body.

Hook, 0 to 2.

A good fly everywhere—in fact, in the early autumn it is one of the most reliable to use.

10. *Bradshaw's Fancy*.—Body, copper-coloured peacock's herl.

Tag, bright crimson wool, with two turns of the same at the head in front of the hackle, which latter should be dark blue Andalusian.

Hook, 0 and 1.

11. *Grey Palmer*.—Body, black silk ribbed with fine silver wire, hackled from head to tail with a badger hackle (black centre with grey tips).

Hook, 0 and 1.

Both Nos. 10 and 11 are useful flies in October and November.

12. *Little Chap*.—Body, copper-coloured peacock herl.

Hackle, pale blue.

Hook, 0 and 00.

This may be ribbed with fine silver wire as a change. The 'Little Chap' is equivalent to the 'Smoke Fly' of the North, but, in lieu of the pale blue hackle recommended by Mr. Halford, the Yorkshire dressers substitute a feather from under the wing of a young grouse.

## CHAPTER VI.

**CLIMATIC CONDITIONS — LOW, BRIGHT WATER —  
TAILERS — SHOULD GRAYLING BE INTRODUCED  
INTO TROUT STREAMS? — EATING TROUT OVA —  
BEST RIVERS — SIZE OF FISH.**

UNDER what climatic conditions grayling take best is a somewhat difficult question to reply to. Apparently absolutely unsuitable days may result far beyond one's expectations and turn out red-letter times, whilst, on the contrary, when the elements seem to be of a most propitious character, an empty basket may be the only outcome of a whole day's fishing. To give an instance. One day in September, 1899, I was at Hungerford fishing the Kennet and Dun. The heat which obtained was a record for the time of year, the thermometer registering 90 degrees in the shade. Most grayling anglers would assert, and with truth, that the worst possible day and time of day is when the sun shines at its brightest. With such a temperature as I have indicated the perspiration ran off my forehead into my eyes, causing me to miss many fish through blinking at the all-important moment. There was not a vestige of wind to cool the oppressive atmosphere,

and I literally broiled as I cast over a shoal of grayling which had taken it into their heads to rise continuously for an hour at least. There was not even the suspicion of the tiniest cloud, and the surface of the river was as calm as the proverbial mill-pond. Yet, notwithstanding that, with a small orange dun I took three and a-half brace of grayling, one weighing 1 lb. 12 oz., and two going 1 lb. 8 oz. apiece. So much for what one would imagine unfavourable conditions. On another occasion in November there had been a frost overnight, but the day following seemed to be excellent for sport in every way. There was a slight haze and a little sun. But the grayling were quite off the feed and would rise to neither dry nor wet flies, the naturals which came out about mid-day being untouched. I have fished in a thunderstorm, and although I caught several brace of trout, which, being out of season, were carefully returned, I had no grayling. I have encountered gales of wind and have usually done fairly well, never experiencing a blank when there was a good ripple on the water. On a certain day I fished from nine until four to the accompaniment of incessant rain—not a drenching deluge, but one of those steady drizzles which delight the farmers' hearts. It was uncomfortable work to move about and cast with waders and a heavy macintosh on, but my pluck was rewarded, for on that occasion I made a bag of fine fish.

I have never fished when there has been a foot of snow on the ground to contend with, and I doubt

if the grayling would feel inclined to try a floating green insect and imagine it to be a new kind of snowflake. Cotton, however, says that in frost and snow grayling will take on a warm, sunshiny day for an hour or two about noon, 'and to fish for him with a grub then is the best time ;' but in regard to fly fishing under such conditions, he adds, 'you are to angle only with the smallest gnats, browns, and duns you can make, and with those are only to expect graylings no bigger than sprats.' Perhaps an ideal day is one when there has been a frost overnight and the weather is hazy rather than bright. Olive duns will hatch out even when the glass is below freezing point, for Mr. Halford points out in his book on dry-fly fishing that on December 3, 1886, on a cold evening, when the air temperature was 30 degrees and that of the water 36 degrees, these flies were hatching freely, and, what is more, grayling were taking them one after the other. One thing would seem to be certain, and that is that the presence of melted snow, or 'snow broth,' as some anglers delight to call it, effectually puts grayling as well as coarse fish from feeding either at the top or bottom.

'An ascending mist is fatal, as in trout fishing,' so says old David Foster. This, however, is not an infallible rule ; in the case of grayling, at any rate. They so frequently go by 'contraries,' and upset all theories and preconceived ideas, that it has not surprised me to find that not only will they take when the thick mists of autumn come stealing over the land, but when the adjoining low-lying country-

side is covered with the watery vapour. In the early morning, too, when the mist hangs heavily upon the water, they will come right merrily to a wet fly. Let me prove these statements by relating two episodes in my own experience. On a certain October day I was grayling fishing in Hampshire. I reached my journey's end between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. I knew that at 5.45 p.m. it would be quite dark, but the longing came over me to take a look at the old favourite chalk stream once more in anticipation of the morrow's sport. At five o'clock the mist was slowly but surely creeping up, and the keeper imagined I had taken leave of my senses when I suggested that I might try the grayling for half an hour. I only had time to reach the top of the preserve it was my good fortune to fish, but I had a rod with me already rigged up, on the off-chance of espying a rising fish. All the same, in my inmost soul I imagined that it would be love's labour lost to cast on the chuck and chance it, or any other principle for the matter of that, after all that I had heard about gathering mist being inimical to grayling taking. I did not see a fin break the surface of the river, but in less than an hour I bagged a brace of nice fish and lost a big fellow, which, unfortunately, came unhooked. There was no mystery about the performance; I quickly spotted a few fish, and cast over them repeatedly with a wet fly well sunk until I, as some would say, worried them into taking. So much for an ascending mist. In the morning when day broke the mist

was still very thick, so much so that the opposite bank was only dimly defined, but between 7 and 8 a.m., when again I did not see a grayling move, by patiently and systematically casting over a shoal, I creelied a brace and a-half, together with a bonny trout of 1 lb. 8 oz. After this I urge grayling fishers to pay no heed to theories. The grayling is so strange a 'crittur,' and takes it into its head to feed at such unusual and extraordinary times, and in such apparently unsuitable and hopeless conditions of weather, that the proverb of Solomon should be borne in mind, 'he that considers the wind (and I will add weather, too) shall never sow.' Let it hail, rain, blow, or shine, get to work the moment the river is reached; surprising and unexpected, and therefore the more gratifying and satisfying, results will often be experienced with this fickle fish.

There is one condition of water which will try not only the temper but the skill of the angler to the uttermost—I mean a low, dead bright stream, as clear as if it were filtered. Under such circumstances as these it is exceedingly difficult to entice grayling to take a fly, the simple operation of casting over them in thin water with the finest point and the smallest fly meaning starting them off quite scared. In this case I have found that the most remunerative, and indeed almost the only, way of obtaining even the little sport which can be hoped for is to fish down stream wet, with as long a line as can be conveniently and properly managed. By taking advan-

tage of every bit of cover, and by making oneself well-nigh invisible to the quarry—‘hiding behind a leaf,’ as a most enthusiastic grayling man terms it—it is possible to get grayling. The cast should be made straight across stream, not up, and the fly allowed to curl round gently—this goes without saying—with whatever current may exist. At the faintest indication of a stoppage the lightest of strikes should be given, as when the line is travelling thus slowly grayling will frequently take the fly and eject it before the angler discovers it. If the height of water varies during the day by reason of frequent raising and lowering of hatches above a fishery, first dropping and then rising eighteen or more inches, much interference is caused to fishing, although when the stream commences to run, and is on the increase, grayling will take considerably better than under a sluggish and lifeless state of water.

The grayling fisher, like the trout angler, will occasionally come across ‘tailers’ in the course of his rambles. Many of those who have visited the quaint town of Hungerford, and have fished the charming stretch of the Kennet there, have had tales of woe to recount of the prevalence amongst the grayling of this practice, which seems to be on the increase instead of diminishing. In the case of trout one can generally manage by employing a large Alder, Alexandra, Dusty Miller, or other small salmon flies, and, by the exercise of a considerable amount of patience and perseverance, to transfer a tailing trout from the water to the basket, but with

grayling it seems almost hopeless to effect this. Nothing that I know of has been discovered in the way of fur and feather which can be quite relied upon to capture grayling when they are grubbing. The skill and ingenuity of the cutest angler seem to be completely baffled, and many an accomplished man has had to return worsted in the combat with the Hungerford tailers. Amongst Southern waters the Hungerford part of the Kennet bears off the palm for the number of tailers it possesses. I have more than once stood on Eddington bridge, and, looking up-stream, have watched the fish tailing not in ones and twos, but literally by hundreds in the shallow flat above. It really appeared as if every grayling in that portion of the river was indulging in an acrobatic performance for the amusement and edification of the complaining and disappointed piscator. The question has occurred to one very keen grayling fisher of my acquaintance whether all these grayling were actually grubbing in the general acceptation of the term, or were burying their heads in the sandy gravel and sticking their tails out of water for the sake of mere devilment, for want of a better word. The gentleman referred to, an out and out good sport, took a considerable amount of trouble and pains to arrive at a definite conclusion upon this matter. He watched the grayling many times going through their performance, and this is what he observed—some would push their heads into the bottom of the river and roll over and over. These antics they

repeated again and again, and in many instances there was nothing to indicate that they were on the look out for larvae of any kind. Appearances, however, seemed rather to point to the fact that they were rubbing their bellies on the gravel for the purpose of ridding themselves of an itching or tickling sensation caused by some parasite adhering to their bodies. They seemed, in short, to be scouring themselves in the same way a trout will do after having spawned, for the sake of pleasure or benefit derivable from the operation. There is no doubt, however, I think, that the majority of the 'tailers' are really engaged in procuring bottom food, for autopsies which have been made have clearly shown that they have been very largely feeding upon fresh water shrimp. Be this as it may, it seems to be pretty well recognised that it is exceedingly difficult to catch grayling when they are playing this irritating game. On one occasion I dressed a fly with a fat reddish brown floss silk body, ribbed with flat gold, added an Indian crow tag and a red hackle at the head. This, it will be seen, resembled to some extent a fresh-water shrimp. Strange to relate, when first I tried it I took two dozen grayling, mostly small, however. I worked it very slowly against stream with a short jerky motion, and the way the grayling came at it was a revelation. I went home perfectly happy, convinced that I had at last hit upon the right thing for these tailers. I named the fly 'the tailers' terror.' But

The best-laid schemes o' mice and men  
Gang aft agley,

for the very next occasion I visited Hungerford, when the grayling were at their usual game, alack and alas ! not a fish could be induced to rise at it and it turned out a complete failure. But I had another shot in the locker—a second fly made of light slate-coloured silk ribbed with silver, an Indian crow tag and ginger hackle. With this I succeeded in basketing a brace and a half of fish, but this pattern when tried subsequently was certainly not a success, and I have yet to solve the problem of what to offer them with a prospect of doing good when they are grubbing, tailing, or scouring themselves, whichever may be the correct expression to employ to describe their extraordinary behaviour in the Berkshire river.

Should grayling be introduced into trout rivers, or should they be exterminated when they are found in them ? As one who is inordinately fond of grayling fishing, I say introduce them wherever you can, and let them increase and multiply as they will, in the streams which they now inhabit.

What have the authorities to say on this all-momentous matter ? Mr. J. J. Manley, in that excellent work of his on 'Fish and Fishing,' says this : 'General observation and experience lead me to the conclusion that, as a rule, trout and grayling do not thrive well together in the same water, trout getting the worst of the partnership, and decreasing in numbers as well as deteriorating in quality. This is very noticeable in some of our best grayling rivers.' This is certainly a most sweeping assertion

to make, but would it apply to our South Country streams?

Frank Buckland gives his opinion on the matter in the following words: 'The introduction of grayling into trout rivers should not be undertaken without due consideration. Grayling, I have observed in my museum at South Kensington, are great bullies, and are continually hunting the trout.' With the first remark we may agree, but with all due deference I would venture to join issue with the second pronouncement. I have again and again watched trout and grayling lying pretty close together in sundry streams, and have obtained an exceptionally good view of them. The grayling in each instance was the lamb and the trout the lion. The moment a grayling took possession of a run, out came a trout and fairly hustled it away, driving it out of the locality. The grayling would venture to return, but in a very short space of time the trout would reappear and worry the grayling off. One would certainly imagine that the trout would be far more likely to be the aggressor than the ladylike grayling, and I think that in the majority of cases this is so. If a shoal of grayling be seen in any river it will be at once noticed that it contains fish of various sizes and of different ages; pinks, shuts, and fish which have attained their majority, will roam about somewhat after the fashion of dace, like a happy family, and feed quite contentedly together. No enmity exists amongst them, but, on the contrary, the greatest harmony seems to prevail. They do

not, as a rule, favour the same portion of the stream as that occupied by trout. Instead of sharp runs or stickles they prefer slow, steady-flowing glides, quiet pools, and deep holes. The aspersion upon their fair fame in connection with being pugnacious is, I think, not proven, and is hardly warranted by the real facts. It must be remembered, too, that Frank Buckland's denunciation of them was apparently based upon what he had observed in the case of fish in captivity, for he states distinctly that the grayling about which he complains were in his museum at South Kensington. But in rivers of good size and of great volume, like most of our Southern grayling streams, does such a state of things obtain? From my own observations, and from information I have been able to glean on the subject from several noted grayling men, I cannot find that the bad name given to the graceful grayling is in the least deserved.

I do urge, therefore, that in rivers where they are found together, and where there is ample room and food for both, they should be permitted to live in peace. Let the lessees of fisheries which hold both these kinds of fish pause well before venturing too hastily upon the extirpation of grayling, for, as one of the foremost anglers in the kingdom puts it, 'Surely the October and November sport, especially on a subscription water, should counterbalance any fanciful presumption as to injury they cause to trout.'

Mr. Halford, in his book on 'Dry Fly Fishing, in

'Theory and Practice,' says, 'There are many reasons why they should be introduced into trout streams, provided there is plenty of food for both,' thus supporting the opinion of the eminent angler to which I have just previously alluded. This is the other side of the case. Mr. Halford adds, 'It gives three months' extra fishing without doing the trout any particular harm.' Such an expression of opinion from so competent an authority as Mr. Halford, who has had the most ample and unique opportunities for observing the habits and peculiarities both of trout and grayling, and whose works are read wherever the English tongue is understood, gives great weight and force to the argument of planting grayling in rivers in which they are not only wanting but sadly wanted. But the whole gist of the matter is undoubtedly contained in the proviso at the end of the sentence I have quoted, 'provided there is plenty of food for both.' Who will assert that the Kennet, at any rate, where not only trout but coarse fish of all kinds abound, is not large enough and does not contain sufficient nutriment for all classes of the finny tribe which are found in it? And yet, as I have stated in a previous chapter, it is, or rather *was*, let me hope, on the *tapis* to net out the grayling in the Hungerford stretch, and destroy the lovely game fish which affords autumn and winter fly-fishers in the South such truly healthful and delightful sport. I would rather say, naturalise grayling in as many rivers as you can which do not now hold a supply of them. Experiments in some

directions have failed, probably on account of the capriciousness of the fish in the way of temperature, formation of river, and so on. They grow—and this is very much in favour of my suggestion—very rapidly, and given suitable quarters will attain the weight of from half a pound to three-quarters of a pound in three years. Discoloured rivers—I mean those which after heavy rains and in flood time get bank-high and very opaque—are not inimical to them so long as the water at other times is pure. The Derwent runs thick for weeks together, and yet grayling, although they cannot vie with their brethren of the Test or Itchen, succeed in it. I do not say that where trout will thrive grayling will do likewise, for the attempts to introduce them into South Country streams which I have before mentioned—the Colne, Beane, and Thames—have been barren in result. It may be that the mildness of the Thames has militated against their doing well in the grand old river, but they have been introduced into the Kennet and Test and have thriven. Why should not the experiment, therefore, be tried elsewhere? In any case I take it that the attempt could not turn out more unfavourably than the endeavour to acclimatise the Rainbow trout, for even assuming that *Salmo Irideus* could be persuaded to stay in our English streams, it is quite on the cards that it would spawn earlier and earlier each year until it approximated in its spawning habits to our own native trout.

One objection raised to the presence of grayling

in a trout stream is that they eat the ova of trout. Now, seeing that a trout deposits its ova in a redd and covers it up afterwards (oftentimes up some side ditch, and not always in the main stream), there would appear to be some little difficulty in a grayling getting at it to devour it. Mr. Halford says he has not come across any record of grayling eating trout ova. He adds that they may possibly do so, but so do other things—waterfowl, for example. Trout eat it themselves. It was amusing on the Itchen one day to see a two-pound trout spawning. Around her were first the male fish, and behind this three or four smaller fish—pounders. They may have been some of her own progeny, for all I know. The moment the female emitted her ova the little trout made a dash for it and gobbled it up as fast as they could, the male fish—the trout *père*—rushing hither and thither, trying to drive them off. While he was engaged with one, the others would be busy eating the ova. But in the *Fishing Gazette* of September 14, 1901, there was a regular facer from the pen of Mr. J. E. Miller. He says this: 'I have caught hundreds of grayling that have, while removing the hook from their mouths, discharged trout ova, and, in making an autopsy, have found plenty of it in their stomachs, but I have never captured or basketed a trout that contained grayling eggs.' He also states in another place: 'During the trout spawning season the grayling literally burst themselves with trout ova.'

In answer to this, I will adopt the *tu quoque*

argument, and contend that, if grayling do really play havoc with trout ova, trout most certainly return the compliment. When grayling are engaged in their domestic duties there will invariably be some trout hanging about their heels, waiting to pick up any of the ova they can, so that it would seem that it is a case of the pot calling the kettle black, and that trout are quite as much to blame for devouring the eggs of the grayling as the latter are for indulging in the same reprehensible practice—having their revenge, as it were—in the case of trout ova, whenever they have an opportunity.

The best Southern rivers are unquestionably the Test, Itchen, and Avon. In the *Field*, however, of March 16, 1901, there appears an article on 'Chalk Stream Trout Seasons,' in which, *inter alia*, referring to grayling in one portion of the first-named river, 'South-West,' above whose name the contribution appears, says: 'What has happened to the grayling nobody seems able to say, but they have to a great extent disappeared, to the joy of the modern dry fly man. At one time it was quite possible to get four or five brace of them in the autumn.' This condition of things does not certainly obtain in the Itchen. Here they increase amazingly, and given suitable grayling weather, or rather, I should say, a day upon which they are taking well, it is not difficult to kill the number mentioned by 'South-West' or even a larger quantity. Speaking as to the size the grayling attains, I may add that one of 4 lbs. 8 ozs. has been killed on the Test. Mr. Francis

Walbran had one of 3 lbs. 9 ozs., and in the Piscatorial Society's famous collection of preserved fish in the Holborn Restaurant there is a specimen from the same river of 2 lbs. 12 ozs. In the Avon near Ringwood three fell to the rod of Mr. T. L. Parker scaling together 12 lbs., a truly wonderful leash. In the May-fly time fish of from 3 lbs. to 4 lbs. have been brought to bank in the Itchen. To go farther a-field, I find that Bowker, a Ludlow man, records in his 'Art of Angling' that a grayling of 5 lbs. 8. ozs. had been taken. A 2-lb. fish caught with the fly may be considered a specimen, for seldom is it that heavier ones are taken, except when they are out of season during the rise of the May fly, when once a year large grayling, like big trout, cannot resist its attractions. Fish up to 1 lb. 8 ozs. are plentiful, and pounders still more so, whilst small fish of 12 ozs. to half a pound rise almost as freely as dace.

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